

V. Area Agency Operations

A. Preparedness

What would you do if a disaster occurred in the area served by your area agency on aging? Do you have a clear plan of finding out the scope of the disaster? Do you know who would call you to notify you that you need to apply the resources of the area agency on aging? Who you would call first? Next?

If you have answers to these questions, you are in a better position than many people running area agencies on aging were in when flood waters covered their service areas, older people's homes were destroyed by tornados and hurricanes and earthquakes shook them awake. The point of this manual is to allow you to begin developing the information you need to answer these questions and the thousands of other questions a leader must have the answers to in times of crisis.

Disasters will place you in the position of needing to offer instant response: what do you need to do, or can you do, to ensure people in your area are safe? The response phase is that time period immediately following the disaster when you will be called upon to initiate activity to stabilize the lives of people affected by a disaster. As you have read in the previous section, Disasters and Older Persons, the effects of a traumatic event on older persons create unique needs that must be dealt with.

This stabilization phase may take from 24 hours to several months, depending on the scope of the disaster. When a tornado wipes out a block you may be able to respond quickly and finish your initial work in less than a day. A flood that covers many counties may take months to respond to because the resources you would normally tap are also flooded. Once the response phase is completed, and stabilization has occurred, you will enter the recovery phase. The recovery phase is sustained care offered over a longer period of time and is intended to assist people in reestablishing their life. There is no lapse between the response and recovery phases; you will need to be ready to begin the recovery phase as soon as the response phase is completed. That means you will need to be establishing a recovery phase even while you are working on the response phase.

Neither of these phases will be executed correctly and efficiently if you don't spend the time on the first phase - preparation. To prepare for a disaster, of course, you need to understand what will be required of your agency when a disaster occurs.

I. Read the Response and Recovery Portions of this Manual.

- A. You will need to know what is expected of you, and those sections delineate those responsibilities. In order to be prepared, the area agency must develop a written disaster response plan. The plan should be practical and simple; however, it must be created so that the plan is comprehensive and relevant to the variety of disasters that potentially could hit the geographic area serviced by the area agency.
- B. Considerations in the construction of a Disaster Response Plan:
 - 1. Consider the types of disasters prevalent in your AAA service area.
 - 2. Consider your AAA's capabilities and limitations.
 - 3. Consider the plans and responsibilities of AoA and your State Unit on Aging.
 - 4. Consider the roles of various relief agencies in your service area.
 - 5. Consider the organizations primarily responsible for relief authority.
 - 6. Assume you will play a greater role in non-national disasters.
 - 7. Consider service capabilities by geographic areas if essential services, such as communications and transportation, are limited or destroyed.

II. Figure out Where You Fit in All Local, State and Federal Emergency Plans.

- A. All states have developed a systematic, written, response to disasters. This response indicates a chain of command in the event of a disaster, including which local, state and federal agency will take the lead in determining the scope of the disaster and requesting assistance from the federal government when applicable.

- B. It is the responsibility of state government to assist local government in implementing emergency management programs in order to protect life and property from the effects of hazardous events. This plan is based on the concept that initial response to an emergency will be by local government agencies and the public and private entities, such as an area agency on aging, that have been designated a role in a disaster.

As a result of this process, most of your disaster preparation consists of establishing and maintaining vertical and horizontal communications with all those people who will work with you when a disaster strikes. Do not expect to be well received if you are calling the county sheriff the day of a tornado with an offer of assistance if they have never heard from you before. If the sheriff has never heard of you, the area agency on aging, or what resources you have to offer, it will take more time than he/she may have available to figure out what role you can play in dealing with the disaster.

To determine who will perform which services in the case of a disaster, you need to know what will happen and what will be expected of you. You will be a player in a community wide response team. If you are to serve this role, you must have a clear picture of all members of this community-wide response team. Prepare the lists at the end of this chapter so you will have this information when you need it. Be sure to update this list as needed.

III. Preplanning Considerations:

- A. Identify current disaster response system and where you fit in.
- B. If no disaster response system is in place, you should initiate one.
- C. The AAA should provide an inventory of community resources for the elderly.
- D. Community emergency planning can serve to educate emergency organizations to the special needs of the elderly and the AAA resources.

- E. Among the organizations that may be a part of the response team are:
1. American Red Cross
 2. Salvation Army
 3. Civil Defense
 4. Mennonites
 5. Council of Churches/Ministerial Alliance
 6. Welfare Offices
 7. Health and Welfare Councils
 8. Weather Bureau
 9. State or Regional Federal Disaster Assistance Agency
- F. Local players in a response team:
1. Local government (mayor, police, county authorities)
 2. Sheriffs
 3. Nursing homes
 4. Media (is there a warning system in place for persons with visual and hearing handicaps?)
- G. Resource people you can call on:
1. Four wheel drive, boat and ham radio owners
 2. "Grapevine technique" for finding elderly individuals during a disaster:
 - a. Mail carriers
 - b. Grocery stores that deliver
 - c. Church groups that visit "shut-ins"
 - d. Desk clerks of single occupancy hotels
 - e. Anyone trained in disaster response who knows the community.
- H. Immediately after a disaster the AAA will be asked to identify the number of elderly affected by the disaster. Information which will facilitate identification should be obtained in advance and incorporated into the disaster plan.
1. The latest census information on the number of seniors by county or tract and block-group.

2. Maps that pinpoint heavy concentrations of elderly people, particularly institutionalized elderly.
3. A Geographic map (GIS) with a demographic overlay would show those in the greatest dangers when disaster possibilities and geography are related, such as floods and hurricanes.
4. Maps of concentrations of one person senior households.
5. Maps of concentrations of low income, minority and ethnic groups. (Do you have an interpreter available if language is a barrier?)
6. Locations of apartment dwellers whose need might go unanswered because of their solitude. Apartment dwellers often move immediately after a disaster.
7. Location of homeowners.
8. Specific data about the socio-economic characteristics of seniors. Often lower socio-economic individuals lack insurance and need more assistance than more economically secure persons.

IV. Area Agency Functioning

- A. Prepare a standard operational procedure which outlines what will be done when a disaster is reported.
 1. Define staff duties and responsibilities (form attached).
 2. Determine alert procedures for both working and non-working hours.
 3. Determine procedures when communications are affected.
 4. Locate operation centers and alternates when primary center is in affected area.

In the event of a disaster, you, and your staff, could well be victims. Your homes, your personal safety, your relatives and friends may need attention before it will be possible to assume the duties of the Area Agency on Aging. As unpleasant as it may be to consider, you may not survive the disaster. A specific chain of command should be in place designating the person who will assume your responsibilities during the critical response phase of disaster reaction. Throughout the preparation stage, this person needs to be involved enough to assume these responsibilities.

At the time of disaster, you will need in your possession tools to begin the response activity. Below is a partial list of what you will need, with blanks for needs specific to your area and the type of disaster you are likely to experience. These items should be assembled in a suitcase and left in a constantly accessible location, such as the trunk of your car.

- _____ The lists of phone numbers above (may be kept on a portable business organizer)
- _____ A copy of this manual on floppy
- _____ A copy of this manual
- _____ Name Badges (to prove you're not a looter)
- _____ Intake forms (samples in this manual)
- _____ First Aid Kit
- _____ Hanging Files
- _____ Flashlight
- _____ Radio with working batteries
- _____ Cellular phone, or info on how to obtain a cellular phone quickly
- _____ List (below) of 4 wheel drive and boat owners
- _____ List of Ham Radio Operators
- _____ Office supplies, including a blank overhead
- _____ Emergency hire forms
- _____ Rubber gloves

B. Response

Response is that phase of a disaster in which you are working to meet the immediate needs of those affected by the disaster. For a tornado that affects three blocks you may be able to complete the response phase in a very short time. The midwest flooding involved a longer response phase because resources normally available were under water.

The response phase is your initial reaction to ensure everyone's safety, sanitation and security is ensured. Until that is complete, you are not ready to begin the recovery phase.

The response phase is a good test of your disaster preparedness. Of course, as a test it is a final exam as you will pass or fail based on your performance. When a disaster occurs a good plan will allow you to maximize your resources and be of greatest assistance to older people.

During the preparation phase you developed contacts with the people and resources who plan to respond to a disaster. This coalition will meet to perform an assessment and assign responsibilities. You should go into that meeting with your resources identified and ready to react to the disaster.

I. Alert Your Staff

A. Institute planned call tree

1. Telephone communication may not be possible; contingency plans for this should be in place. For instance, will you all meet at the office? Where will you meet if the office is destroyed?
2. Depending on the scope of the disaster, your staff may be victims. This should be your first question to your staff: how are you?

B. Assign duties

1. Assign from list.
2. Include plans to staff both the Disaster Assistance Center and the senior center.

3. If a Disaster Assistance Center (DAC) is not established, establish an information resource center.
 4. This should be a review of assignments given during the preparation phase.
- C. When advance warning is possible:
1. A and B above may begin in anticipation of the disaster.
 2. Staff transportation will be the first requirement. Be sure all vehicles have full gas tanks.
- D. Contact key providers.
1. All should have disaster contingency plans.
 2. Include requirements for performance in disaster situation in all contracts or as a Memorandum of Understanding.
 - a. Emphasize the critical need for record-keeping.
 - b. Especially critical are caterers and site managers.

II. Organization

- A. Begin Record-keeping. This is critical; you will need these records to receive reimbursement from the appropriate federal sources later.
1. Staff time (including overtime).
 2. Any supplies.
 3. Number of senior contacts.
 4. Type and amount of service provided.

5. Resource inventory used.
 6. Intake forms for all seniors (samples in this manual).
 7. Any contracted services.
 8. Personal expenses.
 9. Phone log; be specific.
- B. Begin process of locating outreach and advocate workers for the Recovery Phase
1. Ensure disaster timeframe matches disaster needs.
 2. Personal Service Contracts should be available.
 3. Disaster Advocacy and Outreach section of this manual includes a training module.

III. Assessment

- A. To collect sufficient information to determine the type, scope and location of AAA disaster assistance activities.
1. Should be completed within 24 hours of disaster.
 2. This is a very difficult time; respond, don't react.
- B. Information will help determine allocation of coalition resources.
- C. Collect information on:
1. Numbers of affected senior citizens.
 2. Remember nursing home populations; locations of all nursing homes in area should be noted, regardless of immediate impact.

3. The kinds of services needed.
 4. Scarcity and disruption of transportation.
- D. Assess geographic scope of disaster.
1. Assess amount of damage inflicted on seniors, including what type of senior citizens (frail, low-income) are victims and their short and long-term needs.
 2. Assume this initial assessment will be incomplete and imprecise.
 3. Look for service gaps and advocate where additional services and resources are needed.
 4. Report to State Unit on Aging as soon as possible. Phone or Fax, and follow with a written report.

IV. Action You May Need to Initiate

- A. Evaluate and relocate.
- B. Maintain contact with State Unit on Aging and regional AoA office for consultation and guidance regarding assistance, resources and newly developing needs. In the case of a nationally declared disaster, pass the information on to the State of Federal Emergency Management Agency.
- C. Let those people identified earlier as information resources, such as mail carriers, that you are available to assist isolated elderly.
- D. Maintain sources of accurate information; rumors must be controlled.

V. Working with the Coalition of Disaster Responders

In large disasters, most communities form coalitions of agencies that coordinate resources to meet identified needs. There are many considerations in using these coalitions most effectively.

- A. Prior to meeting with the coalition, contact your state unit on aging to determine which services beyond normal scope of service package you will be allowed to offer.
- B. This coalition should be in place as part of your disaster preparedness.
- C. The coalition may cross city, county or even state lines.
- D. Coalition will meet soon after the disaster.
 - 1. In major urban areas, you will want to ensure you are part of these meetings from the beginning. In other areas, you may need to initiate the meetings.
 - 2. Coalition will establish service centers to offer some services, and offer applications for other services. For instance, disaster victims may come to the service center to receive toiletry items, food and clothing as well as applications for emergency housing. Each of these items and applications may well be supplied by a different member of the coalition.
 - 3. Be sure all members of the coalition understand what resources you have to offer and your limitations. Many members of the coalition may need information on the specific needs of older Americans.
 - 4. Try to use the same intake forms for all members of the coalition. While not all members of the coalition will be able to do this, the fewer forms a victim has to complete the better chance the forms will be completed accurately and completely.
 - a. This form will help direct traffic for efficient service delivery.
 - b. This form should include a blanket release of information provision.

5. The coalition may initially establish a service center to offer their services. This center must be made a part of the Disaster Assistance Center if one is established. See the Disaster Assistance Center portion of this manual for more details.
 - a. Designate staff people to work at the center.
 - b. One critical job of these staff is to provide special information and referral service for elderly disaster victims. This could be a dedicated phone line, advertised as the I&R for this purpose. With proper preparation, the regular I&R personnel can assume this function.
- E. Identify resources of each group in coalition.
 1. Match organization with specific resources.
 2. Proper use of coalition avoids:
 - a. Duplication
 - b. Gaps
 - c. Resource hoarding by all organizations
- F. Media Contacts
 1. Be sure media regarding senior services are available.
 2. Be sure FEMA number is included.
 3. This contact should be maintained throughout the disaster. You will want people informed that you have AAA staff in the field and at the DACs to assist survivors.

VI. Field Work

- A. DAC operations and Field Work should be simultaneous.
- B. Field work requires additional personnel.
 - 1. May be contract personnel, if necessary.
 - 2. Private, direct hire is preferable.
 - a. Emergency hire approval may be required from governing body.
 - b. Contracts are pre-drawn and included in this manual.
- C. Training of outreach workers is needed.
 - 1. Short training module is available in this manual.
 - 2. Emphasize the specific duties that you are responsible for and the resources available.
 - 3. On the job training may be needed.
- D. Outreach workers identify immediate needs for people who did not go to DAC.
- E. Outreach workers are given the job of finding survivors in need of assistance.
- F. During initial contact with survivor, outreach worker assesses need for:
 - 1. Medical Care
 - 2. Housing
 - 3. Personal safety
 - 4. Food

5. Personal needs and items (clothing, toiletries)
- G. Once the survivors and their needs are identified, specific responsibility for arranging or providing services may or may not be the responsibility of the outreach workers. What is expected of the outreach worker must be communicated thoroughly during training.

VII. Intake Forms

- A. All intake forms must be maintained in a central file for follow-up.
- B. All seniors contacted by the AAA, at DACs, or by the outreach worker must have follow-up.
- C. Follow-up is required because:
 1. Additional needs will develop.
 2. Additional resources will develop.
 3. You must track services delivered and not delivered.
 4. You must have a list of people to assist them in the recovery process.
 5. This information will be critical to you in advocating for resources to assist the survivors.

C. Recovery

The Recovery phase is sustained care offered over a longer period of time and is intended to assist people in reestablishing their lives. There is no way to return people to their life before the disaster; too often the mementos, landmarks, and tragically even the people that once defined their lives are no longer there. The point is to begin anew.

One important note: throughout your career working with older people you have learned that older people are unique, and their reactions will be unique. For some their life experiences have made it clear that change and even disaster will be survived. For others, the disaster seems to have destroyed all evidence that their life had value. Remember, while you know this many of the Outreach Workers you have hired don't. In your role of coach, you will need to establish within the outreach workers the knowledge they will need to effectively communicate with their client.

I. Administrative Changes that Occur in the Recovery Phase

- A. Emergency needs are met; answers are more complex.
- B. More resources are available.
- C. Long range planning and coordination become paramount.
- D. You, the people who report to you, your state agency and the coalition need to refocus their energies.
 - 1. You must regroup.
 - 2. You must retrain.

II. Long-Range Planning

- A. Meet with the coalition to identify needs and resources.
 - 1. Every member of the coalition will have direct service provider: volunteers, outreach workers, subcontractors, etc., who work day to day with the survivors and can identify the needs.

2. Your state unit on aging will have been working on obtaining additional resources. Current and additional resources are what you will be bringing to the coalition table.
 - a. This funding will be available only if you have effectively communicated the extent of problems and needs.
 - b. State approval will be required for expenditures; you will have a critical role in ensuring the state unit, your agency and your clients are all pulling in the same direction.

III. Maintaining Contact and Providing Services

- A. Outreach workers are maintained. their roles change from meeting emergency needs to identifying needs.
- B. Arranging the delivery of services through providers needs to be arranged. Outreach workers may serve as case managers once the needs are identified. More commonly, outreach workers will identify needs and case managers will arrange service delivery.
 1. An "Unmet Needs" committee needs to be formed by the coalition members. With each member of the coalition offering new financial and physical resources, specific assignments can be made to reach the goals of the recovery phase.
 2. A system must be established and maintained to justify all financial expenditures. If outreach workers serve as case managers, some check on their expenditures must be maintained.
 - a. Always maintain accurate records.
 - b. Reporting requirements may not be explained in advance of receipt of the funds.
 - c. Keep sufficient service and fiscal records to meet any reporting requirements.

3. Your agency fiscal manager or independent auditor should work with you to make sure your reporting systems and expenditures meet anticipated standards. In some instances, for example, a FEMA number may be used as proof the person has been proven to need assistance.
4. The more services contracted, the more oversight will become your primary responsibility in the service delivery system.
5. Be sure the initial outreach efforts are followed up. During the response phase, non-immediate needs are noted. During the Recovery phase, it is your responsibility to meet those needs.

IV. Funding Resources

- A. Section J in AoA response manual.
- B. Older Americans Act Title III reallocated.
- C. Older Americans Act Title IV (disaster specific).
- D. Title 6 (see chapter 6 in this manual).
- E. Community Service Block Grant Funds (these funds may have already been allocated to your local Community Action Program; you may be given a share).
- F. Supplemental (supplemental Congressional appropriation).
- G. Donations from outlying senior organizations.
- H. Title III, National Reserve Emergency Dislocated Workers Project.
- I. Housing Community Development Block Grant.
 1. Soft money - social services.
 2. Hard money - brick and mortar.
 3. Allocated to local governments; available to local entities.